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ABSTRACT

Invitational education maintains that each individual possesses relatively untapped potential for intellectual and psychological development and that this potential may best be realized in a nurturing environment. Utilizing an invitational approach to physical education, physical education teachers may invite students to succeed. Guidelines for providing and enhancing an inviting educational environment include: (1) arranging a pleasant atmosphere; (2) placing positive signs in the gym; (3) recognizing special people and times; (4) developing class spirit; (5) using music in class; (6) showing off student skills and talents; (7) inspiring through reading; (8) providing opportunities that stress participation rather than winning; (9) exposing students to exciting sporting events; (10) teaching personal development as well as skills; (11) establishing a caring atmosphere; (12) using students names; (13) using the telephone to keep in touch with students who miss class; (14) providing opportunities for success; (15) involving students in routine classroom tasks and decision making; (16) keeping up with the fashions, fads, and interests of students; (17) praising students to others, such as parents and other teachers; (18) publicizing student successes; (19) bringing history and foreign perspectives into physical education classes; and (20) being professionally responsible. A student's inventory checklist of physical education invitations is provided. (IAH)

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Strategies For Invitational Physical Education In the Junior High School

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Junior high schools can provide the environment for unique, special things to happen to students. Within the junior high environment, physical education can provide the medium through which not only positive physical things happen but enhancement of social and emotional growth can occur as well. Perhaps these kinds of occurrences can help personalize what the depersonalized society of the past has fostered in schools.

The word invitation comes from the Latin invito which means "to summon cordially, not to shun." An invitation then, may be described as informal or formal messages sent verbally or nonverbally to students, teachers, parents and others. These messages are intended to inform them that they, the recipients, are valuable, able, and responsible (Purkey, 1978).

An invitational approach to physical education presents a means through which physical educators may invite students to succeed. This approach is called "invitational education." Invitational education maintains that each individual possesses relatively untapped potential for the intellectual and psychological development, and that this potential may best be realized in a nurturing environment. Invitational education provides both a theory of professional helping and a practical means of applying it. There are many ways to provide and enhance an inviting educational environment.

Physical education provides a unique means through which to create an invitational setting. Physical education is a people environment, it is an active environment, it is a social environment, it is a changeable environment. We all have been in classrooms in which one teacher replaced another, and

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immediately the class environment changed, became more positive. Just by walking into a room some people enhance their surroundings. Teacher attitude toward oneself is often reflected in the way he acts toward others. This is important in everyone's life, but it should be especially so in a teacher who has the power to influence so many lives so intimately. These type of people seem to "invite" people to succeed, and seem to bring out the best in them. If a person's attitude can alter the way things are perceived in a classroom, then let us consider the many other positive changes in physical education classes which can influence students to be "invited" to learn, to participate, and to be the persons they are becoming.

How to Create The Inviting Physical Environment

Arrange a pleasant atmosphere. A gym can be much more inviting physically, regardless of the age of the building. Bright displays, neat and colorful bulletin boards, and relevant posters can brighten the environment, especially when they are changed regularly. Attractively displayed sayings and slogans can also add to the "spirit" of the gym. Attractive hanging baskets and plants on stands around the room or office help develop a "homey" atmosphere.

Place positive signs in the gym. Inviting signs such as "Please Help Us Respect Massey Hill Junior High School," and "Please place used towels in the hamper" are much more pleasant and request cooperation instead of invoking negativism.

Invite By Using A Special Approach

Recognize special people and times. Since all students usually take physical education in junior high schools, it is easy to invite more students in special ways. Birthdays of students, fellow teachers, and principals can be marked on a private calendar in readiness for a special greeting. Even the

grouchiest person will light up when he or she is given a surprise greeting or party.

Develop class spirit. At the beginning of the school year, the teacher can invite the physical education class to decide upon a name for the class group. The class might also select an emblem, motto, and class colors.

"Play that funky music." Use music to add "tempo" to warmup exercises. Let students bring their favorite records to class to provide the "beat" to which they move as they exercise. This adds a new dimension to exercising and can help make an otherwise boring and required activity, such as warmups, somewhat fun and exciting.

Show off skills and talents. Junior high provides an excellent forum for the display of acquired physical skills or talents such as tumbling, basketball free throw shooting, square dancing, or punt, pass, and kick exhibitions. Strive for "group recognition and effort," as well as individual spotlighting. These types of opportunities for displaying students' talents may come at school assemblies, P.T.A. programs, as well as at community club meetings. This enhances community awareness of the physical education program and allows the public to see that physical education is for everyone.

Inspire through reading. Occasionally, take time at the beginning of class to read an inspiring sports story. As you read it, take time to indicate personal traits in the story protagonist which are possessed by successful individuals (desire, courage, or determination). Even point out some of those special characteristics in people you all know in school.

Participation is winning. Arrange some physical education activities so that there are no traditional "winners" and "losers." Present some activities in a manner so as to encourage teamwork, cooperation, effort, helping others, and improvement. Emphasis on these components may be accomplished through varying

your grading system. Any grading system can be modified to place major emphasis upon effort, attitude, cooperation, and sportsmanship. You might discover that if you have the students work on these aspects of their being, the "skill and performance" aspect of physical education may fall into place. Keep competition in perspective.

Wide world of sports. To add excitement or invite interest and learning, secure (usually free of charge) special film highlights of sporting events such as the World Series, the Super Bowl, the Olympics, the Masters Golf Tournament, or Wimbeldon, etc. Your students are likely to remember this, and may be inspired to new heights of achievement.

Be A Human Invitation

We are all people. Remember to teach students, not just basketball or gymnastics. Always keep the human factor in mind. Few students will actually become the superbly skilled players we would like them to be, but they can become reasonably skilled individuals. Remember that students are human beings to be treated with respect.

Be the greeter, be the leave taker. Offer an inviting smile or greeting as students come into the gym. Be on time and ready to go. What teachers do speaks more loudly than what they say.

Create a special environment. At the beginning and end of each class take a few minutes to establish a caring environment. Share a thought, talk about a current event in local or national sports or ask about things. The idea is to let the students know that we are all human first, and teachers and students second.

Learn students' names. This is basic to inviting. As you learn their names, ask students what they like to be called. If you should call them by a nickname or label them with a "cute" name, make sure it is positive and with

their approval.

Invite new students. When a new student enrolls in class, take a few minutes before class to find out several pertinent and positive things, such as what town the student is coming from, personal interests, whether or not the student is an athlete or club member, and where the student resides now. Then introduce the student to the class and share these tidbits of information. You'll have a friend for life and help this student feel at home and assist him make friends more quickly.

Let students know they are missed. When a student is ill or misses a class for other reasons, a note or phone call from the class may work wonders. Such a message may be nothing more than a piece of paper containing a brief cheery note signed by all the class members. In addition to its thoughtfulness, it tells absent students that they are part of "our" class and are missed.

Invite via "ma bell." Use the phone in a positive way. Communicate via phone the positive things a student is doing. School work does not even have to be mentioned. Comment upon the effort, cooperation, and attitude of the student. This may reduce problems from students and let them know that you notice their positive efforts. It also improves parental attitudes concerning both their child and physical education.

Spread positive rumors. Take note of something positive a student does; "expand" it a little and mention it to the class without giving the student's name. The purpose of positive rumors is to tell students how good they are and that their efforts as well as their accomplishments are noticed.

Invite through intangible recognition. It is perhaps as important to receive intangible symbols of success as it is to receive tangible rewards. These are symbols which are special to the individual and can be given in front of other students. They can be phrases such as "nice try," "I appreciate

the effort," "you really helped your team today," "you are a real team player," or "I really like the way you hustled today." Who knows, these might be the only symbols of success that particular student receives all day long.

Provide the opportunity for success. Try to approach each school day in the frame of mind so that you will provide at least the opportunity for each child to have a success of some sort in your class. A success a day...is inviting...and contagious.

Share duties. There are many small and time consuming tasks which students can, and are willing to, do for the teacher. Assign weekly or monthly assistants to help take roll, distribute and collect equipment, monitor and clean the locker room, gym, and other areas. Assistants may be selected on the basis of cooperation, responsibility, effort, attitude, and enthusiasm. Make sure that all students have an equal opportunity to assume these duties at some time during the year.

Influence Student Attitudes Positively

Involve students in decisions. As much as possible, involve students in class decisions, or at least discuss the possibilities and options with students. If students are involved in the decision making process, they are more likely to be involved with decision implementation.

Incorporate positive verbalism. Find ways to reword possible negative phrases so that they are expressed in positive, inviting terminology. These phrases should be geared toward improvement rather than as an embarrassment or destructive putdown. Learning what to do is more important than learning what not to do.

Enter the Students' World

Be "with it." Make an effort to better understand the world of your students. Try to keep up with fads, fashions, popular heroes, the latest films,

sports, television programs, actors, singers, and other current interests of the students. Using an example from a television program to invite learning of a classroom concept can be quite effective.

Worship their heroes. Find out who some of the students' sports heroes are and put up a poster of them to decorate the gym and locker room.

Send Special Invitations

Send double strength invitations. As nice as it is to receive kind words directly, it is even nicer to hear that kind words have been expressed about you to others. Rather than praise a student directly, praising the student to other teachers or to parents is often doubly effective, for the original praise will probably reach the student with double impact.

Be explicit with your invitations. The more explicit an invitation, the more it lends itself to acceptance. Sometimes teachers create misunderstanding by being vague, and students wonder "What was meant by that?" When the teacher is explicit with his or her invitation, the likelihood of acceptance increases. Sometimes a message is lost because of understatement or subtlety. Send messages that are most likely to be accepted by students and in a language that students understand. A message lost or misunderstood is like no message at all, and sometimes worse, if the message received is misunderstood.

Send unconditional invitations. Often we are guilty of sending invitations that suggest we really don't mean them. Such examples might be "You can win if you are willing to pay the price", or "We'll put you on the team, but you are going to have to work hard." These all convey messages of conditional regard. It is more inviting to send unconditional invitations, simple declarative statements of support such as "I think you can do it" or "You're a member of this team."

Recognize and Invite Students Via The Media

Advertise the successes of your students. Use the school newspaper, public address system or bulletin boards to communicate special activities, awards, and recognition taking place in your physical education class. These may provide the means to recognize student assistants, the student of the week or month, skills records, feats, and accomplishments. Names and pictures of physical education assistants and specially recognized students may also be displayed here. Notations may be made on bulletin boards of special sporting events coming up within the school or community.

Use the newspaper. Watch the weekly newspaper for positive articles dealing with students and families, their interests, and the course content. Clip newspaper articles of interest and share them with your class, and invite your class to do likewise.

Establish an interesting, readable library. In the classroom, part of physical education (health) maintain a collection of health magazines, books, articles as well as sports related literature which may be of interest to the age group for check out, free time reading, or extra credit. Be sure the reading levels match those of your students, and provide some "fun reading."

Invite Interest in Physical Education

Bring the history of sports to life. Invite students to draw posters depicting historical aspects or highlights of the particular sport in season. This is also applicable to special or unusual events in sports. This could be used effectively to introduce a new sport activity which is being taught, or to point out little known facts of a traditional sport or activity.

Do a mini unit on an unusual or foreign activity. Include units on the history of particular sports which you offer. It will interest and even astound some students to realize the origins of popular games such as soccer or tennis.

Find out the countries in which they originated and how they evolved to be played the way they are today.

Invite variety. Vary the standard rules of traditional games in creative ways. This takes some of the rigidity out of the expected and increases involvement, participation, success, and excitement.

Invite Others To Become Involved In Physical Education

Invite administrators. Principals, supervisors, and school board members are people too, and might enjoy being invited to your class for special activities or events. This helps both ways, because students discover that remote administrators can relax and be human, and administrators have a chance to be reminded that students are human also.

Invite a teaching principal. Invite the principal to be a part of a class for a day as a student or teacher. Invite the principal to teach a special activity which might be of interest to students, or to talk with them about a hobby.

Invite parental involvement. At the beginning of the year, and periodically thereafter, send notes to parents inviting them to come observe, participate, or even help teach. This not only provides for good community relations, but may unveil resource people of whom you were unaware. If you know of parents who have a particular sports interest or skill, approach them and extend an invitation to share it with your class.

Invite Through Professionalism

Be professionally responsible. An important way to improve the quality of life in your school is to be ethical in your conduct. In a small school especially, word travels fast. Be trustworthy with confidences and follow rules. If there are unacceptable rules, work within the system to change them. Support

your fellow teachers and the organization that pays your salary.

Respect human dignity. If a disruptive attitude or behavior problems persist with a student, be careful not to cause this student embarrassment before the entire class. Take the student aside, describe the unacceptable behavior in no uncertain terms, and discuss possible ways to improve the behavior. Respect the student's human dignity at all times. An example of this would be to say "I would like to talk with you about your behavior in class today" as opposed to "You've been a real jerk in class today."

Work closely with the guidance counselor. If you see a problem situation developing with a student, talk with the guidance counselor and request that he or she talk "off the record" with the student to achieve appropriate behavior or correct a potential problem situation. Sometimes this helps just to have the student air personal feelings in an "unofficial" manner to school personnel. This may also give the teacher valuable feedback into improving his or her behavior toward students and achieveing better rapport.

Keep the vision. See students as they can be, not as they are. Too often, teachers say "Do your best" when "I know you can do better, so practice" can be a more powerful invitation to realize their relatively limitless potential. Every student is becoming, so it is important for teachers to invite them to become in positive directions.

While most physical educators are inviting much of the time, it is important to be aware of the consistency with which we are inviting. Some of us may be more inviting individuals than others. Some of us may be more inviting at certain times than others. In the same vein, some physical education teachers may be more inviting with particular classes than others. It is as necessary for us to be aware of the times we are inviting as the times we are less inviting. Toward that end, we require some means to determine the existence of elements

related to invitations in a physical education class.

The hallmark of many educational concepts is measurement. Once we determine that certain elements may contribute in a positive way to an environment, we need to determine if a need exists. If a need exists, we then employ the process, in this case, invitational education concepts.

In order to better determine the existence of certain elements of invitational education, an inventory checklist for physical education students and teachers has been developed. By employing this basic inventory of invitations the teacher can invite the opinions of each student in order to better determine the extent to which others perceive the physical education environment as inviting. Using this inventory, the physical education teacher can also better personally consider the invitational status of each class.

Below is an inventory of physical education invitations which, when filled out by students, can serve to better inform us of our invitational status in physical education classes.

INVENTORY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION INVITATIONS

PLEASE CHECK THE APPROPRIATE LINE:	YES	NO	CAN'T SAY
1. Are you treated courteously by your physical education teacher?	____	____	____
2. Does the physical education teacher know you by name?	____	____	____
3. Does your physical education teacher help students in class get to know one another?	____	____	____
4. Does your physical education teacher try to recognize special events like birthdays, special achievements, and performances?	____	____	____
5. Does your physical education teacher personally invite you to participate in activities in class?	____	____	____
6. Are the gym and physical education teacher's office physically attractive?	____	____	____
7. Do you feel welcomed when you come into your physical education class?	____	____	____
8. Is it easy to visit your physical education teacher when you need to?	____	____	____
9. Does your physical education teacher follow through on things he/she says they will do?	____	____	____
10. When you have problems, does your physical education teacher express concern and care?	____	____	____
11. Is your teacher courteous to everyone in class?	____	____	____
12. Is your physical education teacher on time for classes and appointments?	____	____	____
13. Does your physical education teacher seem to really listen to you?	____	____	____
14. Are you invited to give suggestions to your teacher about the physical education program?	____	____	____
15. Do you feel free to communicate your concerns to your physical education teacher?	____	____	____

		YES	NO	CAN'T SAY
16.	Do you feel free to make an appointment with your physical education teacher?	_____	_____	_____
17.	Does your physical education teacher give students a voice in the way things go in class?	_____	_____	_____
18.	Is your teacher fair in the enforcement of rules and policies?	_____	_____	_____
19.	Is the physical education office usually open?	_____	_____	_____
20.	Do the activities provided in physical education class help you in any way in your personal development?	_____	_____	_____
21.	Does the weekly newspaper carry information about your physical education program?	_____	_____	_____
22.	Does your physical education teacher try to make new students feel at home?	_____	_____	_____
23.	Are the bulletin board and displays in the gym up to date?	_____	_____	_____
24.	Does your physical education teacher make positive remarks about students?	_____	_____	_____
25.	Does your physical education teacher care about YOU?	_____	_____	_____

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